



IMAGINE STEPPING INTO
YOUR CHILD'S WORLD AND
SEEING THINGS FROM HIS
OR HER POINT OF VIEW.

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Talking about preparing to leave

Deployment is a very stressful time for all family members—especially children. The uncertainty of when or if things will return to normal can make a child's life very difficult. This separation can be a time of worries and needs. What can you do to help make this difficult time easier for your children? Here are a few ideas to help you and your children.

Take time to talk—and listen!

- Talk with your children about what is happening. This will give them time to think about the deployment, begin to accept it, and get used to their feelings about the separation to come.
- Be available whenever your children want to talk.
- If possible, let your children know why and when you are leaving, where you are going, and how long you will be gone—as much as you are allowed to tell.
- Allow your children to ask questions about the deployment.

Reassure your children.

- Reassure your children that, if you face danger, you are well trained to be careful and will do everything you can to stay safe.
- Give open and honest answers, using words your children can understand.
- Talk about the deployment during regular conversations—at dinnertime, bedtime, or while playing.

Prepare your children for change.

- Talk about what will happen when you are away and what may be different when you return.
- Talk about what each child will be doing during the separation.
- Invite your older children to share deployment experiences with their younger brothers and sisters.
- Remember that separation can be a time for your children to develop new skills and take on new responsibilities that will lead to feelings of success.

Separating from children

- Preschool children may feel they are the cause of the coming separation. Make sure they know that the deploying parent is *not* leaving because he or she doesn't love them anymore.
- School-aged children may ask more questions than younger children. They need to be reminded that the deploying parent is leaving to do a special job for our country and will return to the family as soon as possible. They are likely to have concerns about how the separation will affect them and will need to know about changes in school, sports, and other activities that involve the deploying parent.